DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 289 097 CG 020 363

AUTHOR Bloland, Paul A.
TITLE A Student Affairs Perspective on Intercollegiate Athletics.
PUB DATE Jun 87
NOTE 19p.; Paper presented at the National Conference on Student Affairs and the Student Athlete (Los Angeles, CA, June 8-9, 1987).
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (120) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Athletes; College Athletics; *College Students; Higher Education; *Student Development; Student Needs; *Student Personnel Services; *Student Personnel Workers

ABSTRACT

In the area of college athletics, the chief concern of the student affairs professional is the relationships which ought to exist between institutions as represented by the division of student affairs and the student athlete. The athlete faces the same set of academic and social demands that the non-athlete faces in addition to the unique demands of athletics. The development of a student affairs perspective might be preceded by axioms reflecting the academic mission of a university and the mission of student affairs, the out-of-class environment and personal circumstances of students, and recognition that athletes are also students. Athletes as students face many difficulties, including the demands of intercollegiate athletics, the stress of athletics, and the risk of being developmentally short-changed. The relationship between student affairs and athletes and the athletic program should follow these principles: (1) student affairs has the same general responsibility to athletes as it does to other students; (2) institutions should provide special services to the student athletes including an academic athletic advisor to help them surmount the pressures created by athletic demands; (3) athletes should be a part of the mainstream of student life; (4) athletes should have the same rules as other students; (5) equity should be extended to women's athletics; and (6) the physical fitness of all students must equate with that of the varsity athletes. The task is not to make parallel services for athletes, but to make sure the athlete is aware of these services and encouraged to use them. (ABL)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED289097

CG 020363

A Student Affairs Perspective on Intercollegiate Athletics

Paul A. Bloland
University of Southern California

(Paper delivered at the "Student Affairs and the Student Athlete" conference conducted at the University of Southern California, Los Angeles, California on June 8-9, 1987).

While sports and athletics have been a featured element of American higher education since before the Civil War, it was with the advent of football in 1869, when the first intercollegiate game was played between Rutgers and Princeton, that college sports began to move from an informal to a more organized and expensive version. The result was, according to Brubacher and Rudy (1976), "a thoroughgoing commercialization of intercollegiate sports" (p.132). Money to support the programs had to be raised from affluent donors and admission charges which in turn demanded winning teams, again leading to still greater costs. The result we see today in the enormous pressures placed on presidents, coaches, and student athletes and the multitude of ways, not always ethical, they seek to relieve that pressure (Michener, 1976; Strohm, 1987; Shriberg & Brodzinski, 1984).

However, the field of student affairs is, perforce, less concerned with the structural problems involved in the commercialization of intercollegiate athletics than with the relationships which exist, or ought to exist, between the institution, as represented by the division of student affairs, and the student athlete. While the athlete as student faces certain unique demands and pressures not experienced by the non-athlete, he or she is also subject to the same set of academic and social demands placed upon the non-athlete. It is at the

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Paul A. Bloland
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

disjuncture between these two sets of demands that the student affairs division must mediate with its services predicated as they are upon its concern for student welfare and learning.

The development of a student affairs perspective on athletics might well be preceded through the statement of a set of prior assumptions about universities and students. The assumptions that follow may appear axiomatic but they, in fact, grow out of a particular view of higher education and the academic process.

Assumption one: The academic mission of the university is preeminent. The modern college or university is organized around the academic experience, the process of learning, if you will. Most of its activities contribute to that experience; in the library, classes, laboratories, and the curriculum. Universities do not exist in order to field athletic teams nor do they require the presence of intercollegiate athletic competition in order to accomplish their mission. As far as the accomplishment of that primary academic mission is concerned, the intercollegiate athletic program could vanish from the campus tomorrow and few would notice its demise nor would they long mourn its passing. Universities are not about athletics - they are about learning and its foundations - research and academic scholarship.

Assumption two: The mission of student affairs is to complement the educational mission of the university - not to be its surrogate nor to compete with it. Colleges and universities were not organized in order that students could experience the values of residential living, learn leadership in extracurricular activities, learn cooperation in athletics, join fraternities and sororities, etc.

These are all worth-while activities and do much to enhance the learning environment and, as far as that goes, make their unique contribution to student growth and development. But many fine universities, particularly abroad, have no campus, no organized activities, no athletic teams, no student affairs office, and no counselors. Yet they perform their mission, albeit defined somewhat differently than ours, quite satisfactorily.

But, nevertheless, we do have an advantage over those institutions precisely because we do care about the quality of life of our students, believing that students learn better when services and experiences contributory to their success at the university are provided.

Assumption three: My third assumption grows out of the preceding one, that is, that the out-of-class environment and activities of the campus have an effect upon student learning and personal development. That effect is rarely neutral, but either helps or detracts from student social and intellectual growth and development. The crowd or group that the student hangs out with helps to shape his or her attitudes, for better or for worse. A campus with a rich program of drama, music, outside speakers, learned conferences and symposia, student government, social activities, and the like, conducted in aesthetically pleasing surroundings and with democratic involvement in governance, creates an attitude and a set of values that will contribute mightily to the development of an educated and cultured person. This out-of-class developmental environment is primarily the

responsibility of the student affairs office.

Assumption four: My fourth assumption is that the personal circumstances of students also affects the quality of their learning. Students who are attempting to carry 16 units of course work while worrying about costs, or who have a disability which affects their mobility on a campus not designed for wheelchairs, or who come to college with under-developed academic skills, or who are suffering from acute depression, or whose attacks of asthma cause them to miss critical lectures, or who are practicing with the varsity most afternoons - these are but a few of the personal circumstances that may block otherwise competent students from doing as good a job in college as they are capable of doing. Not to neutralize or remove these blocks to learning is to contribute to a waste of human potential. Again, the student affairs office figures heavily in this area.

Assumption five; My fifth and final assumption is that athletes are also students. This may be pure fantasy on my part since for many college athletes, playing football or basketball, tennis or baseball, in college is only a part of the marketing strategy necessary for them to attract the kind of attention that will result in a lucrative pro contract. With this attitude, it is easy to see why to these athletes, classes, assignments, tests, and papers are an unwelcome distraction from their real job - playing ball. Is it any wonder, then, that many major in eligibilty, taking the easiest courses available and barely getting by in those, and is it any wonder that so many leave without a degree or anything resembling an education? The academic program, to them, has been a barrier and a distraction.

However, the institution can legitimately make no other assumption about the status of student athletes: they are students.

And, paralleling the attitude of many student athletes, we have the perspective so eloquently expressed in the immortal words of Honest John Taggart, the head coach who, according to James Michener in his Sports in America, brought the mythical University of Jefferson into the big-time ranks,

> ...I sort of get sick to my stomach when some faculty committee issues a statement that my boys should be scholars first and athletes second. Any self-respectin' man with his head screwed on right must realize that football consumes so much of a boy's time, fall, winter, spring, and summer, that he simply ain't got time to be a scholar too. If we didn't have a supply of snap courses, and cooperatin' professors who know the score, ain't no way my boys could stay in school. We hire them to play football, and we pay them well to do it, and it's only after their eligibility is used up that they got time to be scholars. (Michener, 1976, 180-181)

Athletes as Students

No matter what Honest John Taggart thinks of faculty committees, at present the system calls for athletes to be enrolled students and we had better find a way of accommodating these incompatible expectations and getting on with our business. Honest John's view is a legitimate one and one which recognizes his reality but those of us who are charged with the real business of a university have a reality to face as well and Honest John is out-of-line.

What about athletes as students? Regardless of our lofty pronouncements about seeing athletes as no different than our other students, the fact remains that there are several major differences which, if not recognized and dealt with, do athletes a grave injustice and leave them between the proverbial rock and

the hard place: that is, the tension betwen the expectations of the coach and those of the professor.

First, intercollegiate athletics is a full-time job for most. During the season it is the ever-demanding, never-to-be compromised, reality that athletes must deal with. Practice, road-trips, off-season conditioning are crucial; everything else is secondary: classes, tests, social life, personal time, library time - all must take a back seat. With these inordinate demands upon his or her time, how can an average student, or even a good student, cope? Writing papers, doing library research, cramming for a test, or even getting to classes at all, much less on time - this all takes time, time the athlete usually doesn't have. Cognitively, we recognize this incompatibility but do little about it - in fact, we really don't seem to know what to do about this little bit of inescapable reality.

Second, athletics is physically and psychologically stressful. I remember trying out for the freshman wrestling team at the University of Wisconsin, practicing at top speed every afternoon, rushing through dinner after practice, and then falling into my sack after dinner - too physically exhausted to turn a single page of my biology textbook. It got better but my energy was directed toward wrestling and survival - not toward studying - and my grades that first year showed it.

Psychologically, the pressure can be even greater. From being adulated high school stars, athletes are suddenly competing with other stars, every bit as good or better than they are. Few people are impressed with their newspaper clippings; the coaches are constantly on them; their self-esteem is shattered;

we forget that they are 18-year olds and away from home for the first time, lonely and homesick, and afraid to own up to it for fear of being called a wimp; the professors throw more reading at them in each class than they read in a whole year back in high school; grades slip and with them their chances of staying in school long enough for their prowess to attract pro scouts. But to have to go home, a failure, after the buildup would be unbearable.

Third, the athlete may be developmentally short-changed. I've mentioned earlier that the types of experiences that students have in college have an effect upon their learning and upon their personal growth and development. However, the experiences of athletes differ greatly from those of the non-participant as noted above. Athletes also tend to be isolated from other students by virtue of their time commitment and, perhaps, their living arrangements, not to mention their great skill.

In addition, they have been catered to, fawned over, handheld and kept in a semi-dependent state for years. Research tends to bear out that contention. Ewing (1976), for example, found study habits and attitudes worse for athletes than for non-athletes. Landers (1978) and Dowell, Badgett, and Hinkler (1972) found that high school athletes do not tend to develop the intellectual self-concept and academic skills that they will need to succeed in college.

In terms of development, Sowa and Gressard (1983) found that there was no overall difference between athletes and non-athletes on the accomplishment of developmental tasks as measured by an

inventory of tasks. However, athletes scored significantly below non-athletes on three sub-scales: educational plans, career plans, and mature relationships with peers. The authors concluded that the amount of time spent on athletics and the almost exclusive focus on athletics may preclude athletes from attaining expected developmental gains in those areas.

Kennedy and Dimick (1987) assessed the career maturity and realistic career expectations of athletes participating in revenue-producing sports (football and basketball) and found, as expected, that there were significant differences between the athletic group and a comparison group of non-athletes on a measure of career maturity. Forty eight per cent unrealistically expected to play their sport professionally although the accepted probability of their ever realizing their ambition was less than 2%.

Butler (1987) found similar results in a year-long survey study of a complete freshman class at a small state college. His data showed that students who participated in intercollegiate athletics during their freshman year did not demonstrate the same developmental gains on autonomy and mature interpersonal relationships as the non-athletes.

While these data are not conclusive, of course, they do suggest that there may be something about the campus experiences of athletes that inhibits their normal and expected development, at least on these two variables.

On the other hand, Miller and Jones (1981) have pointed out that organized athletics "have the capacity to create a developmental milieu beneficial to all who participate in them.

They can advance students' level of moral and ethical development, their willingness to accept responsbility, their critical thinking, and their acquisition of purpose - if the institution's athletic program bears in these directions" (p. 668).

Bowen (1977) has cited the many references in the literature to character development, sportsmanship, fair play, self-discipline, courage, and health as hoped-for outcomes of participation in physical education and sports; "...the spectator aspects of sports are often advocated on the grounds that they help build school spirit, provide a wholesome release for the pent-up energies of undergraduates, and help coin the financial support of alumni and the general public" (p. 209).

While these may be possible outcomes, their effects on personality, character, and health have not been researched, so far as I know and, hence, are not really known. Lacking positive evidence, we have little choice but to assume that there is something positive about athletics.

Student Affairs and Athletics

I'd like now to turn to the development of a student affairs perspective on athletics. I have already listed five assumptions about the university and athletics and discussed the athlete as student. Given these assumptions about higher education and those characteristics which set off athletes from other students, how should the student affairs professional relate to intercollegiate athletics?

One form of relationship is through the administrative reporting line. The athletic department may report to the chief student affairs officer, usually in smaller institutions or those in which the athletic program doesn't make much money, or it may be totally divorced from the student affairs area, usually in large institutions playing big-time ball and in which football and basketball not only make money, but also help to fund the other sports. The reporting and accountability structure of intercollegiate athletics tells the observer a great deal about the nature and function of athletics in the institution and the extent to which they are integrated into the on-going university. We all know about the schools in which the athletics department is practically a law unto itself, accountable only to the president who may or may not have sufficient clout to control it. Can you imagine the president of the University of Alabama disciplining Bear Bryant?

So, should the athletic program report to the CSAO? I would say "No" in any situation where its role is tangential to the purposes of the university, where its purposes do not relate to the educational and developmental goals of the student affairs office or division. Under such circumstances the CSAO will not be able to do much about it and will spend much of his or her valuable time trying to bring it under control or worrying about recruiting and eligibility time bombs to the detriment of the rest of the student-oriented programs. I regret having to say that because I'm sure you will recognize that I have thereby conceded the inevitability of athletics' peripheral status. On the other hand, if the university sees intercollegiate sports

as a normal and welcome adjunct to its student-oriented program, it will take steps to see that its reporting structure, rules and regulations, and services all serve to integrate athletics and athletes into the campus mainstream.

But, irrespective of the reporting structure, how should the student affairs staff member, CSAO, or resident assistant view their campus-wide responsibilities vis a vis athletes and the athletic program. Because circumstances differ so much from campus to campus or even from year to year, rather than set down a set of prescriptive rules or suggestions, I have listed some principles which I believe will help the student affairs staff maintain a consistent and balanced institutional perspective on athletics.

1. First and foremost, since athletes are also students, reluctant or not, student affairs has the same general responsibilities to them as it does to all other students. Regardless of how tightly they are controlled by the coach, how remote the athletic department is from the rest of the university, or how disinclined the athletes themselves may be to involve themselves with the rest of the student body, the student affairs office cannot afford to make unjustified exceptions or allowances for athletes nor to place conditions on its services to them which are not applied equally to other students.

2. However, athletes face unusual blocks or barriers to their learning such as lack of time, heightened stress, and developmental deficiencies. These barriers are, for the most part, placed there by the very institution that has recruited

them knowing all the time the problems they are going to face. It is, therefore, the college's responsibility to help the student-athlete to surmount them.

My second principle is that it is legitimate and, in fact, mandatory for an institution to provide special services that will help to mitigate and reduce the unique pressures engendered by the incompatibility of varsity athletics and academic demands. We have always tried to recognize special circumstances and disadvantaged populations by providing special services to those populations, i.e., we set up an international students' office for students from abroad; an office for disabled students deals with the special needs of that population; a women's center will assist returning housewives make the transition back to school; minority student concerns are handled by special offices; even campus chaplains and sorority advisers are manifestations of that same willingness to pinpoint special needs and deal with them. So it is not at all inconsistent to do the same for student athletes, recognizing their dual role as both athletes and students. We need to remind ourselves occasionally that the institution's arrangement with student athletes is mutually beneficial. Both are getting something out of it and both must give something to it.

There are some programs and services that seem particularly useful to student athletes because they represent an institutional recognition and understanding of their special needs and circumstances. While some few services may need to be dedicated - that is, with some elements reserved for the exclusive benefit of the athlete, most others need not be if a special effort is

made to refer athletes to campus student services and if those services then consciously tailor some of their offerings to the athlete's special circumstances and needs.

First and foremost should be a professionally trained academic athletic adviser. These advisers can report to the student affairs or to the academic affairs divisions but should not in any way be subject to undue pressure from coaches and others to keep key players eligible at any cost nor should their work be evaluated on that basis. Their jobs should not have to depend upon keeping the coaches and the athletic department happy. While this office should have complete access to the athletic department, it should not be administratively housed in that department for obvious reasons.

In addition to monitoring the academic component of the athlete's career, the academic athletic adviser should be a referral agent for other campus services and programs. For example, some athletes will need to be referred to the campus learning assistance program for help on study skills and, perhaps, for tutoring. Most would benefit from short-term campus programs in stress management or time management skills. Personal and psychological counseling must also be available on a confidential basis with, perhaps, access to a peer counseling systems staffed by current or former athletes. And, of course, not all athletes will sign a pro contract their senior year and so will need to know something about planning for an alternative career followed by job placement.

In addition to making it possible for services under his/her direction to tailor some of their activities to the special needs of student athletes, the CSAO could well be a policy catalyst, running interference for university policy changes that would recognize, and not penalize, the special circumstances of the athlete.

3. My third principle calls for athletes to be a part of the mainstream of student life to the maximum extent possible. They should utilize the same services available to other students except when alternatives are clearly indicated by their special status as athletes. They should have no special privileges except those mandated by the NCAA and conference regulations. There should be no athletic ghetto, no special residence halls for athletes. Efforts should continuously be directed to building bridges between athletics and the rest of the campus as a matter of policy so that athletes have every chance to grow intellectually and developmentally on an equal basis with their fellow students.

4. There cannot be one set of rules for athletes and another set for non-athletes. You have all seen the motion picture in which the star halfback is declared academically ineligible on the eve of the big homecoming game with arch-rival, Old Siwash, and some ineffectual old crock of a professor is pressured by the coach and college president to change the grade. Fairness and equity must govern the institution's relationship with all students - including athletes. Academic and behavior problems must be dealt with in an even-handed,

objective but compassionate manner, and must be perceived by all as even-handed and fair.

5. The same principle of fairness and equity must be extended to women's athletics. While participation in women's sports has greatly increased since the enactment of Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (West, 1984), tighter budgets and the greater visibility of men's sports may lead to selective retrenchment with women's sports taking the brunt of it.

6. And finally, if you believe in sports, athletics, and physical fitness fight for your intramural and club sports program and for your individual sports facilities and clubs such as tennis, handball, running, etc. Intramural fields and open tennis courts have a way of disappearing in the wake of parking structures, presidential libraries, and the like. In terms of education the physical fitness of the entire undergraduate population must in some way equate with that of the varsity athlete.

In conclusion, let me recapitulate for you the responsibilities of the student services/development program. In 1986 a document was released by the Council for the Advancement of Standards for Student Services/Development Programs. Developed by a body representative of some 21 professional organizations in the field of student affairs including NASPA and ACPA, the Standards specify the "minimum essential elements expected of any institution and its student services and student development programs." The Standards state that

> Such programs and services must (a) promote student development by encouraging such things as positive and realistic self-appraisal, intellectual development,

> appropriate personal and occupational choices, clarification of values, physical fitness, the ability to relate meaningfully with others, the capacity to engage in a personally satisfying and effective style of living, the capacity to appreciate cultural and aesthetic differences, and the capacity to work independently and interdependently; (b) assist students in overcoming specific personal, physical, or educational problems or skill deficiencies; and (c) identify environmental conditions that may negatively influence welfare and propose interventions that may neutralize such conditions. The educational experience of students consists of both academic efforts in the classroom and developmental opportunities through student services and developmental programs. Institutions must define the relative importance of these processes. (ACPA Developments, Summer, 1986, p.5)

As you can readily ascertain, these objectives describe programs and services that are made available to all students including the student athlete. The task is not how to devise a parallel student services program for the benefit of athletes only but, rather, how to make certain that the athlete is aware of the availability of these services and is encouraged and helped to use them as needed. Because they do and will need them, perhaps more than will the rest of the student body.

References

Bowen, H. R. (1978). Investment in learning. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Brubacher, J. S., & Rudy, W. (1976). Higher education in transition (3rd ed.). New York: Harper & Row.

Butler, S. V. (1987). The relationship of involvement in extracurricular activities to the development of college freshmen. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Southern California, Los Angeles.

Council for the Advancement of Standards for Student Services/Development Programs. (1986, Summer). CAS standards and guidelines for student services/development programs. ACPA Developments, (Special Edition).

Dowell, L., Badgett, J., & Hinkler, R. (1972). The relationship between high school athletic achievement and the variables of self-concept and academic achievement. Psychology, 9, 48-52.

Ewing, L. E. (1976). Career development of college athletes: Implications for counseling activities. Dissertation Abstracts, 36, 7204.

Kennedy, S. R., & Dimick, K. M. (1987). Career maturity and professional sports expectations of college football and basketball players. Journal of College Student Personnel, 28, 293-297.

Landers, D. M. (1978). Socialization via interscholastic athletics: Its effects on educational attainment. Research Quarterly, 49, 75-83.

Michener, J. A. (1976). Sports in America. New York: Random House.

Miller, T. K., & Jones, J. D. (1981). Out-of-class activities. In A. W. Chickering & Associates (Eds.). The modern American college (pp. 657-671). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Shriberg, A., & Brodzinski, F. R. (Eds.). (1984). Rethinking services for college athletes (New Directions for Student Services, No. 28) San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Sowa, D. J., & Gressard, C. F. (1983). Athletic participation: Its relationship to student development. Journal of College Student Personnel, 24, 236-239.

Strohm, Q. (Ed.) (1987). The commercialization of college sport (Special issue). Academe, 73(4).

West, C. (1984). The female athlete - Who will direct her destiny? In A. Shriberg, & F. R. Brodzinski (Eds.), Rethinking services for college athletes (New Directions for Student Services, No. 28) (pp. 21-30).

10/10/87